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Viewing cable 06BRUSSELS429, EU OFFICIALS AGREE ON NEED TO BUILD MOMENTUM ON

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06BRUSSELS429	2006-02-08 14:52	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Brussels

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRUSSELS 000429

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/08/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [FAID](#) [CY](#) [GR](#) [TU](#) [EUN](#) [USEU](#) [BRUSSELS](#)
SUBJECT: EU OFFICIALS AGREE ON NEED TO BUILD MOMENTUM ON CYPRUS

Classified By: Political Officer Vincent Carver for reason 1.5 (b/d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) European Commission and Parliament officials agreed with visiting DAS Bryza February 6-7 on the need to build on the momentum created by Turkish FM Gul's recent proposal on opening Turkish and Northern Cypriot ports. The EU officials noted that Turkey could not open its ports to Cypriot vessels without the political cover of movement toward ending Northern Cypriot isolation. All agreed that a halt to Turkey's EU accession negotiations could have serious geostrategic consequences and negative effect on Turkey's 2007 national elections. END SUMMARY

¶2. (C) EUR DAS Matthew Bryza met with European Commission Director General for Enlargement Michael Leigh, Commission Unit Head for Turkey Christian Danielsson and advisor on Turkey to Enlargement Commission Rehn, Jean-Christophe Filori, February 6 and with Member of the European Parliament (MEP) and EP Rapporteur on Turkey, Camiel Eurlings (Dutch, Center-Right) February 7 to discuss Turkey and Cyprus. Leigh, stressing that EU accession negotiations with Turkey would proceed on their merits and not on political considerations, emphasized the positive effects of the negotiations. Once "taboo" subjects were now open for discussion, with the EU and Turkey enjoying a more sophisticated and higher level dialogue. Given pressure from member states, the EU and Turkey are holding a series of monthly seminars, including on issues such as human rights and religious freedom. For their part, the Turks are taking a practical approach. Leigh stressed that the process is valuable and maintaining its momentum will be key to further promoting reform in Turkey. In this light, the EU will attempt to avoid the risk of Cyprus, possibly with other member states, halting accession negotiations absent Turkish

implementation of the additional protocol.

¶ 13. (C) One way to avoid such blockage, Leigh explained, is to convince Nicosia that direct trade with the north does not imply recognition of the TRNC. Having the UN or another body manage trade out of Famagusta is one option worth exploring to allow a form of direct trade, while affording Greek Cypriots a sense that they had not surrendered their claim of sovereignty over the North. The Greek Cypriots, however, continue to link Famagusta with their demand for a moratorium on construction in the north and with a hand over of Varosha, which the Turkish Cypriots reject. Still, by potentially opening a debate on the Famagusta-Varosha issue, Ankara's recent Cyprus proposal seems to reflect a new political willingness by Ankara to fulfill its obligation to extend the Additional Protocol (by opening Turkish ports to Greek Cypriot ships). By so doing, Leigh continued, Turkey may convey within the EU a sense of momentum on the difficult port issue sufficient to allow the Commission to avoid criticizing Ankara on this matter in its October progress report.

¶ 14. (C) In any case, the EU recognizes the primacy of the UN's role in forging an overall settlement. Commission Unit Head for Turkey Danielsson emphasized the positive role Athens has played on Cyprus, noting the U.S. might want to continue to encourage Greece to play a helpful role in trying to persuade Nicosia to be more reasonable. Danielsson observed that there may be a window of opportunity for progress after the Cypriot elections in May and before the European Commission issues its annual monitoring report on Turkey in October or early November. DAS Bryza agreed that Greek FM Molyviatis has indeed been helpful, including with the Greek aide memoire regarding the Gul initiative, which points toward the Famagusta-Varosha proposal. DAS Bryza added that the U.S. would continue to engage Athens on the issue.

¶ 15. (C) Leigh noted that Turkish accession negotiations were taking place within a wider context: public opinion in many member states opposed Turkish accession, more parties are calling for a closer examination of the EU's absorption capacity (Leigh observed that this was generally perceived as "code" for opposition to Turkish EU membership), and debate was beginning over where Europe's borders are situated. The Commission's tactic, Leigh added, is to try to keep enlargement, particularly regarding Turkey, as part of a larger debate on the future of Europe. Otherwise, many people will focus on Turkey's differences with the EU rather than on the EU's success in promoting reform and exporting stability throughout southeastern Europe.

¶ 16. (C) Filori, in a separate meeting, acknowledged that no Turkish government could be expected to open its ports absent moves to diminish Northern Cypriot isolation. The key is to avoid "the big clash that everyone foresees" by providing Ankara the necessary political cover to implement the Additional Protocol. According to Filori, the Commission wants the Council to bless its financial aid package to the north and provide additional tangible benefits to the Turkish Cypriot population. Confidence-building measures could help ease the sense of isolation as well, he added, stressing that the EU recognizes the indispensable role of the UN in this regard. That said, Filori added that Nicosia must acquiesce to such measures and this "will be difficult, to say the least."

¶ 17. (C) Filori reiterated Leigh's observations regarding Greek Cypriot calls for the return of Varosha and a moratorium on construction in the north. Bryza noted concern over the possibility that Nicosia, sometime this year, would send a ship as a provocation toward the Turkish coast with Turkey preventing it from entering a Turkish port. Filori predicted that, in this scenario, several member states would support Nicosia and agree to suspend accession negotiations with Turkey. Filori and Bryza agreed the U.S. and European Commission should think through options for responding to such a move by the Greek Cypriots.

¶ 18. (C) Dutch MEP and EP Rapporteur on Turkey Eurlings agreed with DAS Bryza on the need to try to build on the momentum created by the Gul proposal to avoid a possible stalemate on accession negotiations. Eurlings also stressed that the U.S. can continue to play a helpful role by quietly but firmly persuading the Turkish leadership, "as a friend," to promote further political and societal reforms. Erdogan and others, Eurlings stressed, should drop their "fighting their way into the EU" attitude and concentrate more on promoting reforms such as opening the Halki Seminary and returning some Christian churches to their religious communities. This, he emphasized, would go a long way in helping shape a more positive European public opinion about Turkey.

¶ 19. (C) Likewise, Eurlings underscored, Ankara must alter its penal code, particularly articles 301 and 305, to allow for greater freedom of expression. Eurlings noted that even

Enlargement Commissioner Rehn (a usually calm Finn), became very emotional when discussing Turkish "obstructionism" on religious freedom and property rights with a Turkish parliamentary delegation and GOT chief accession negotiator Babacan in December. Eurlings cautioned that the end of 2006 could result in a crisis if Turkey does not implement the Additional Protocol. He added that the end of 2007 could bring an additional crisis if the EU determines that Turkey has not demonstrated sufficient progress in meeting the Copenhagen criteria on democracy and human rights under the Association Framework Agreement.

¶10. (C) Focusing on religious tolerance, Eurlings stressed the emerging consensus in the Netherlands on the need to train imams in the Netherlands rather than allowing them entry from abroad. He agreed with Bryza that a key challenge would be to ensure that the trainers were themselves moderate. Eurlings further agreed that Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) could be a helpful partner in imam training, provided that the Diyanet agreed to reduce its efforts to exert political control over Turkish emigre communities in Europe.

COMMENT

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¶11. (C) DAS Bryza's EU interlocutors appeared genuinely to want to avoid the "train wreck" predicted by some in Brussels regarding Turkish accession negotiations by discussing ways to help promote Ankara sufficient political cover to begin to implement the Additional Protocol. They recognized that Gul's proposal indicates an increased willingness by Ankara to try to generate some more positive thinking on how to proceed toward a compromise. They also agreed that one way to help provide Turkey with some political cover was to ease the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots, through EU aid for the region and via confidence-building measures. While Eurlings observed that Papadopolous "always says no" to any proposal aimed at promoting a settlement, the EU officials agreed with DAS Bryza on the need to continue talking on how best to convince Nicosia to engage in a practical discussion aimed at ending the deadlock. All also agreed on the need to engage the UN and maintain it as the primary conduit for settlement talks.

¶12. (U) DAS Bryza has cleared this message. DAS Bryza's energy-related meetings reported septel.
MCKINLEY